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## Filner, Carrere receive FAL 2003 Spirit awards

by FE P. KOONS

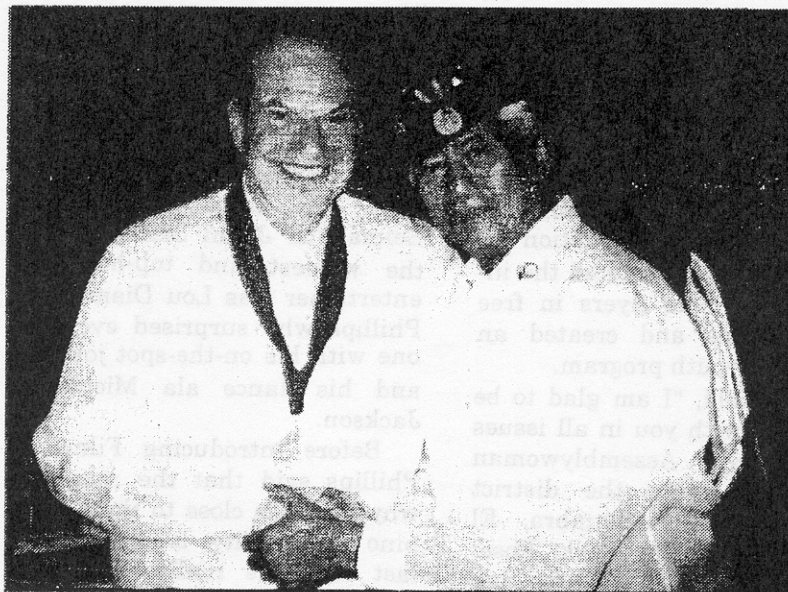
US Congressman Robert Filner of San Diego and sultry Hollywood actress Tia Carrere were bestowed the 2003 Spirit awards in a benefit dinner for the Filipino American Library October 4 at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

Filner who has consistently advocated for equity for the WWII Filipino American veterans received the Spirit medallion for public service. The Democrat congressman who represents San Diego said that the US Senate is expected to sign the bill granting full access health care to WWII Fil-Am veterans. He also announced that by the end of October US President Bush should sign the bill.

"Now the Filipino American veterans are indeed 'veterans of the United States' to which the audience responded with a loud applause. Filner stressed that health care access is one of the steps to obtaining full equity whether they live in the US or in the Philippines.

Gorgeous Tia Carrere accepted the medallion from 2002 role model Spirit awardee and Hollywood actor Lou Diamond Phillips. Carrere who received a lifetime achievement award at the Cine Manila International Film Festival last August said that she is proud to acknowledge her ethnic roots.

The star of the TV series Relic Hunter stressed that ethnicity is important in the



SAM ICALINA (R), president of the WWII Fil-Am Veterans of Carson congratulates Congressman Bob Filner of San Diego (L) who was a Spirit awardee for public service given by the Fil-Am Library in Los Angeles Oct. 7.

lives of people. Then she smiled and said, "How great it is to be Filipino."

In turn, the talented actress belted out a seductive version of "Blue Bayou" changing some of the lines to "I'm going back someday to Manila" where the folks are fine..." to which the crowd applauded loudly.

In a brief interview with Alex Janairo, (the father of Tia Carrere) who comes from San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, he said that it is a great privilege for Tia to receive the award from the Filipino American Library. Janairo who works at Wells Fargo is now based in Nevada. Carrere's sister, Deidre who is studying at UNLV,

added that she is very, very proud of her sister. "She acknowledged her ethnicity. It is important to be Filipino," Deidre said.

Mona Lisa Yuchengco who received the journalism award, recognized the work of the Filipino Americans in the U.S. She said that Filipinas magazine features achievers in the Filipino community. Very little is written about Filipinos, Yuchengco said.

"Because we speak English well, we are oftentimes ignored. We seem invisible... we have the knowledge and skills... we are in the classrooms, hospitals, hotels... we shouldn't be afraid to rock the boat. The gratitude should

(over)

flow both ways."

California State Assemblywoman Judy Chu who also got the public service award, mainly for her strong advocacy against hate crimes. The hate crime bills that she sponsored improved the prosecution of hate crimes, prohibited the insertion of hate flyers in free publications and created an anti-bias youth program.

Chu said, "I am glad to be working with you in all issues of justice." Assemblywoman Chu represents the district that includes Alhambra, El Monte, Monterey Park, Rosemead, South El Monte, San Gabriel and San Marino.

The Los Philippine Women's Club established by Sol Albano Ramirez in the late 50s and early 60s were honored for community service. Burger King was given the corporate philanthropy award. The Burger King Scholars Program

has awarded a total of 5471 scholarships of \$1,000 each for college and post-secondary vocational and technical school to deserving youth.

Entertainers for the night were Jose Llana, Alexander Selma and Jenni Selma. But the wittiest and top-humor entertainer was Lou Diamond Phillips who surprised everyone with his on-the-spot jokes and his dance ala Michael Jackson.

Before introducing Filner, Phillips said that the reason why Filner is close to the Filipino community is that his last name is really Filipino. Dinner cut short. Phillips sang "I'm a Soul Man," showing off with the splits and moonwalk style dancing.

Fritz Friedman, who is the chairman of the board of the Filipino American Heritage Institute, said that the awardees have helped to en-

rich the lives and culture of the Filipino and Filipino American community in Los Angeles.

"As different as they may seem on the surface, the common thread which binds them together is a nobility of intent to improve and maximize the cultural and educational state of our lives," Friedman stressed.

The mission of the Filipino American Library is to actively promote the history, culture and professional achievements of Filipinos and Filipino Americans through leadership development and educational and cultural programming, thereby contributing to a culturally dynamic and multiethnic America.

For more information on the Library, call Tessie Dery at (213) 382-0488.